

It'll be quite a 'do' at the Hairspray Ball and 'Hairball'

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Big Hair Alert!

That's me in the wacky, fluffed-up, striped and beaded, electric-blue hairpiece. I wasn't quite ready to be a blue hair, but right now, wigs are big.

You might say hair is bustin' out all over, as S.A.'s **creative** community rediscovers the joy - and the fund-raising potential - of big, bodacious hair. And just in time to welcome Halloween. Even before the Broadway hit show "Hairspray" opens at the Majestic Nov. 23, hair is on a high here, as two highly artistic groups prep for both a Halloween Hairspray Ball and a Hairball - all in one weekend.

Last week, city culture-meister Felix Padron was guest of honor at a lunch at Acenar to help kick off an artist-driven campaign to raise funds for the much-touted Cultural Collaborative. Monday, Padron's inviting the whole city to the Collaborative's final town hall meeting, from 5: 30-7: 30 p.m. at San Antonio College's McAllister Fine Arts Center, where they'll debut a draft of recommendations to unite and bolster our "**creative economy**." A full report will be out in January.

Last week, a new national report put S.A. toward the bottom of a list of "entrepreneurial" cities. But the high-tech-centered list didn't measure the energy - or economic boost - that a thriving arts community can bring.

To make the Collaborative's vision a reality will take money. That's where the Hairball comes in. Artist Bettie Ward, the committee chair, credits businessman/arts aficionado Pete Selig with the Hairball idea, which has brought in big bucks for nonprofit groups elsewhere. Selig offered his Acenar restaurant for the bash, from 7 to midnight Halloween night. Stylists from Elizabeth Arden's chic Red Door Salon are madly making outrageous wigs to be worn by brave celebrity models at the "do," and auctioned at the end. They'll even fluff up nonwigged guests as they arrive. Great start for a Halloween night on the town. Call (210) 207-6960 for details. And if the Hairball idea spooks cat owners, it's even more apt than it sounds. As party planner Nancy Cook observed, "We're asking people to 'cough it up for the arts.'"

Hairspray Ball

Artist Brad Braune and his pals didn't know about the Hairball when they planned their own "Hairspray Ball." Fortunately, the invitation-only costume event at Sunset Station, featuring Las Vegas troupe Miss Magnolia Thunderpussy and her Catty Litter, is Oct. 29. So the very hip can make both events. Great weekend to "wig out."

Oh! Oprah!

S.A.'s Billie Watts got the birthday surprise of her life last week - a trip to Chicago and tickets to the Oprah Winfrey show. It was the trip of a lifetime. And it had a very special meaning. As her 50th approached, her husband, Wayne, an SBC exec, was planning something extra-special. Last year, he gave Billie a trip to visit her longtime best friend Mary Polglase, a Southern Baptist missionary in Malawi, Africa. And Billie took along a tape of Oprah visiting Africa. The two talked about how wonderful it would be to see Oprah in person.

Last week their dream came true. It took months, but Wayne got tickets for a taping of the show

in Chicago, and brought Mary back over to go with Billie. The trip fell between their October birthdays.

As it happened, a very pregnant Julia Roberts was also a guest on the show, so the pair got to see a special screening of her hot new movie, "Closer." Great gift.

But as Billie put it: "Going to 'Oprah' is a thrill. But the real thrill is celebrating my friendship with a wonderful, spiritual friend like Mary." Happy birthday, for sure.

Susan Yerkes' column appears Wednesdays and Sundays in S.A. Life. Got a hot tip? Call her at (210) 250-3542, or e-mail syerkes@express-news.net. Cheers!